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RUEHGG/UN SECURITY COUNCIL IMMEDIATE
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL IMMEDIATE 3109
RUEHTV/AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE 0777
RUEHFK/AMCONSUL FUKUOKA IMMEDIATE 1720
RUEHJM/AMCONSUL JERUSALEM IMMEDIATE 0382
RUEHNH/AMCONSUL NAHA IMMEDIATE 4071
RUEHOK/AMCONSUL OSAKA KOBE IMMEDIATE 5507
RUEHKS/AMCONSUL SAPPORO IMMEDIATE 2280
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TOKYO 000028

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [EAID](#) [UNRWA](#) [KWBG](#) [KPAL](#) [IS](#) [JA](#)
SUBJECT: JAPAN EXPRESSES CONTINUING CONCERNS OVER GAZA;
WILL CONTRIBUTE FUNDS

REF: A. TOKYO 4
[1](#)B. 08 STATE 135559

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Classified By: Ambassador J. Thomas Schieffer for reasons 1.4(b) and (d)
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[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: Japan remains deeply concerned about the situation in Gaza, but official public statements have been measured and even-handed. Following his December 31 telephone conversation with Israeli Prime Minister Olmert (ref A), Prime Minister Aso telephoned Palestinian Authority Abbas on January 3 and urged him to do whatever he could to end the violence. He also informed Abbas that Japan will make available USD 10 million in humanitarian assistance, including USD 3 million in response to the UNRWA flash appeal (ref B). In subsequent public statements, Prime Minister Aso, Foreign Minister Nakasone, and Chief Cabinet Secretary Kawamura have all expressed deep concern, particularly citing the introduction of Israeli Defense Force ground units into the conflict. The Israeli Ambassador in Tokyo has met with MOFA counterparts to urge against United Nations Security Council action. Japan's view is that the Security Council does have a role to play in addressing this conflict. END SUMMARY.

ASO CALLS ABBAS; PROMISES HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

[1](#)2. (C) Following his December 31 telephone conversation with Israeli Prime Minister Olmert (ref A), Prime Minister Aso January 3 called Palestinian Authority President Abbas to urge him to do whatever is possible to bring the violence in Gaza to a halt, confirmed MOFA First Middle East Division Principal Deputy Director Akihiro Tsuji. Tsuji said that although Japan realizes Abbas has no influence with Hamas, a call from Aso to Abbas was appropriate to express Japan's concern about the ongoing violence and to convey its intention to be of assistance. Aso told Abbas Japan will make available USD 10 million in humanitarian assistance, including USD 3 million in response to the UNRWA flash appeal. Tsuji told us that the remaining USD 7 million would be disbursed prior to the end of the current fiscal year in March, but that the channels through which this support will

be delivered have yet to be determined. Possibilities under consideration by MOFA include making funds available to WHO or UNICEF. According to Tsuji, this assistance will be formally agreed upon and announced to the public on Friday, January 9 following the next Cabinet meeting.

PUBLIC STATEMENTS CONTINUE TO EXPRESS CONCERN

13. (U) In addition to publicizing calls made to Israeli and Palestinian leaders, Aso and his senior advisors also continue to make public statements expressing concern. In his New Years press conference January 4, Aso told reporters his government has urged both sides to constrain their forces and stated that "the deployment of ground troops has worsened the situation." That same day, Foreign Minister Nakasone issued a statement that Japan "is deeply concerned about the fact that the situation in and around the Gaza Strip is deteriorating, and that Israeli ground troops have entered the Strip, in spite of the international community's calls for a ceasefire. At the same time, Japan deplores the fact that rocket attacks launched from the Gaza Strip against Israel are continuing." He again called on both sides to immediately halt the use of force and work to achieve a durable cessation of violence, and also mentioned Japan's intention to provide emergency humanitarian assistance. Chief Cabinet Secretary Takeo Kawamura in his briefing to reporters January 5 reiterated Japan remains "deeply concerned" about the violence, repeated Japan's call to both sides to cease the violence, and said that rocket attacks against Israel by Hamas were "extremely regrettable."

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ISRAEL LOBBIES AGAINST SECURITY COUNCIL ACTION

14. (C) Israeli Ambassador to Tokyo Nisim Ben-Shitrit met January 5 with Deputy Vice Foreign Minister for Foreign Policy Koro Bessho, who is responsible for Japan's United Nations policy, and separately with Bessho's superior, Deputy Minister for Political Affairs Kenichiro Sasae, confirmed both Tsuji and Israeli Embassy Second Secretary Israel Strolov. The purpose of Ben-Shitrit's call on both was to urge Japan to oppose either a Security Council meeting or statement/resolution on the Gaza conflict. According to Tsuji, while Bessho remained non-committal, Japan's view is that the Security Council is responsible for maintaining peace and security, and accordingly, the Security Council should act in this instance to address the ongoing violence. That said, Tsuji caveated his remarks by adding that Japan will consult with other members of the Security Council regarding actions to be taken.

15. (C) The Israeli Embassy believes both meetings went well. Strolov reported that Sasae opened his meeting by recalling his visit to Israel last May and the subsequent visit to Tokyo of Israel's MFA Director General in December, noting he was "not surprised" when the violence erupted. Both Sasae and Bessho were in a listening mode, said Strolov, and did not express any strong protests or condemnations of Israel's actions, leading the Israelis here to believe the Japanese have an understanding of Israel's actions. However, Strolov did acknowledge the Japanese seem to have a problem with the scope of Israel's response and the resultant civilian casualties. The Israeli Embassy is very satisfied by the tone of Japan's public statements, reported Strolov, who noted "we couldn't have expected better, and could have expected a lot worse." Strolov told us protests have continued for the past two days in front of his embassy, but they have been small and peaceful. (NOTE: There have been small demonstrations at U.S. Consulates in Japan, but thus far nothing at Embassy Tokyo. END NOTE.)

¶6. (C) In addition to requesting meeting with Japanese government officials, the Israeli Ambassador was also called to a meeting January 6 by Parliament member Taro Kono, Chairman of the Lower House Committee on Foreign Affairs. According to Strolov, Kono started the meeting with a rather confrontational tone, stating he had been requested by the members of his committee to deliver an appropriate response to the Israelis concerning the events in Gaza. However, instead of delivering any such message, he asked Ambassador Ben-Shitrit for an update on the situation. He asked a number of follow-up questions, but did not offer any criticism of Israel, and ended the meeting by stating he would report back to the committee the results of his meeting. Strolov said that both he and his ambassador left thinking that while Kono might have requested the meeting to deliver a stern message, he apparently had a change of heart.

SCHIEFFER